



AHERI 2021 FIRE SIDE CHAT

“COVID-19 and its effect on Internship Programs and Industrial Attachments in Africa’s Higher Education Institutions”

CONCEPT NOTE:

Africa Higher Education Research Institute (AHERI) focuses on research with a view of making Higher Education relevant to sustainable development in Africa. The Institute does this through hosting conferences, colloquia and high-level discussions which bring together researchers to turn ideas into action. In 2021 AHERI calendar of activities has the virtual Fireside Chat, a Colloquia culminating in a conference later in the year.

It has been one year since COVID-19 pandemic was first recorded in Kenya and the existence of restriction measures that has disrupted the academic cycle through closure of academic institutions. Internship programmes or industrial attachments are integral part of higher education programmes that offer an opportunity for the students to be exposed to work experience which aids their transition from school to work. The impact of internship on personal and professional development has been established to be critical in preparing students for the transition from school to work.

The restrictions have affected three cohorts of internship directly in the short term and may have more negative effects in the long term; as the effects of the pandemic on the economy and the education system become clearer. Some of the elements of the pandemic that has affected internship programmes include; restrictions prescribing working from home for those already completing their internship programmes , closure of companies due to economic hardship as a result of the pandemic that would absorb students for their internship, reduced or sub optimal transfer of skills due to retrenchment of skilled workers from the companies and limited supervision by lecturers due to restriction of movement by supervisors and suspended academic programmes.

The Fireside Chat would like to introduce conversation on what gaps have been noted and initiate process of finding out how to remedy or improve the internship programmes. Which stakeholders need to be brought on board and what are their roles?

Further the presenters and discussants will clarify the opportunities the pandemic offers to remedy the previous challenges or restructure the industrial attachment? Is it time to recognize apprenticeship with more time spent at work and less theoretical engagement at academic institutions?

Can the relationship between industry and academia be enhanced whereby chosen industries and companies get into partnership with academic institutions? Some of the benefits will be improved research and design departments for the companies and implementation of relevant curriculum for the academic institutions.

The presenters and discussants have varied and long experience in Industry, Academia, and Governments agencies. They bring in multi-disciplinary perspectives from diverse cultural and socio-economic focus. This being the first in a series of four episodes that builds up engagement of different stakeholders will culminate in the AHERI 2021 Conference in October with the Theme Partnerships in Higher Education for Sustainable Development.